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Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Fifty-eighth session

Summary record (partial)* of the 1215th meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 30 June 2014, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Ameline

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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The discussion covered in the summary record began at 10 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Chairperson** declared open the fifty-eighth session of the Committee.

Statement by the Director of the Human Rights Treaties Division

2. **Mr. Salama** (Director of the Human Rights Treaties Division, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that the Twenty-Sixth Meeting of Chairpersons of the Human Rights Treaty Bodies had taken place the previous week and that the main topic of discussion had been the follow-up to General Assembly resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system (A/RES/68/268). The input provided by the Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on that occasion had proven most valuable. The General Assembly resolution represented a landmark in the treaty body reform process. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) was in the process of scheduling the additional meeting time allotted to the treaty bodies and hiring the necessary support staff, which was proving to be problematic.

3. The high level of participation of States parties in the Meeting showed that they attached great importance to the treaty body system. States parties expected the treaty body system to be predictable, efficient and to take full account of their views. Given that States parties were those who benefited most from the treaty body system, it was important to take their expectations for the reform process into account.

4. It was clear that better time management was the key to expediting the consideration of State party reports. Under the General Assembly resolution, treaty bodies would be required to report on the number of States complying with their obligations, matters relating to time management and the efficiency of their working methods.

5. One of the positive outcomes of the Meeting was the fact that all participants had agreed that the treaty bodies should operate as a single system and not as separate entities. If the various treaty bodies operated as a single system, problems such as conflicting jurisprudence could be avoided.

6. While the chairpersons who attended such meetings could not reach conclusions on matters of substance, which remained the responsibility of the individual treaty bodies, they could reach conclusions on general working methods and procedural matters. The chairpersons who attended such meetings did not take decisions on behalf of treaty body members but endorsed and recommended courses of action to the members of their own treaty body. The OHCHR secretariat had prepared three detailed notes on the areas in which the working methods and procedures of the treaty bodies could be harmonized, namely: a simplified reporting procedure; constructive dialogue between treaty bodies and States parties; and concluding observations. States parties tended to receive a large number of recommendations from the different treaty bodies. It was likely that States parties would find those recommendations easier to review and act upon if they displayed some degree of consistency. Above all, it was necessary to preserve the credibility of the treaty body system and to ensure that it continued to add value to States parties' efforts to promote and protect human rights.

7. **The Chairperson** said that the outcome of the Meeting of Chairpersons warranted further discussion. It was clear that the Committee would have to change its working methods to meet the expectations of States parties and that it could play a leading role in the reform of the treaty body system.

8. **Mr. Salama** (Director of the Human Rights Treaties Division) said that the new United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights would be fully briefed on the status of the treaty body reform process when he took office. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women could also make a valuable contribution to the post-2015 development agenda.

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (CEDAW/C/58/1)

9. *The agenda was adopted.*

Report of the Chairperson on activities undertaken between the fifty-seventh and fifty-eighth sessions of the Committee

10. **The Chairperson** congratulated the members of the Committee who had been re-elected and thanked the outgoing members for their contribution to the Committee's work over the years.

11. Since the fifty-seventh session, the State of Palestine had acceded to the Convention, bringing the total number of States parties to 188. While the ratification status of the Optional Protocol had not changed, Serbia had accepted the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention. There were currently 69 States parties that had accepted the amendment. Moreover, Tunisia had withdrawn its reservations to the Convention and four States parties had submitted their periodic reports since the last session, namely Liberia, Lebanon, Eritrea and Slovenia.

12. Directly following the fifty-seventh session, she had attended and delivered a statement at the opening of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York. On that occasion, she had conveyed the importance of including a stand-alone goal on gender equality in the post-2015 development agenda. She was pleased to report that some of the core principles of the Convention featured in the zero draft of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

13. She had also met with the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the new Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka. The Secretary-General had recognized the importance of general recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations and the Committee's statement on the post-2015 development agenda. Her meeting with the Executive Director of UN-Women had laid the foundations for the Committee's cooperation with that entity in reinforcing the implementation of the Convention and its concluding observations. Following the present session, she would meet with the Executive Director to discuss ways to enhance the implementation of general recommendation No. 30.

14. In New York, she had also participated in a panel discussion on the empowerment of women and girls beyond the 2015 Millennium Development Goals and in a panel discussion on stereotypes and women in politics. In addition, she had participated in the second meeting of the Permanent Forum of Arab-African Dialogue on Democracy and Human Rights in Cairo, Egypt, and in a forum on Nordic women's rights in Malmö, Sweden. She had also given a presentation on the decriminalization of prostitution at a meeting organized by Amnesty International France and delivered a statement on gender equality in the context of development assistance at a conference organized by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Paris.

15. The Meeting of Chairpersons had afforded her an overview of the action being taken by the various treaty bodies to give effect to General Assembly resolution 68/268 in the three areas mentioned by Mr. Salama.

16. Before inviting the other members to brief the Committee on their intersessional work activities, she recalled that she and several other members of the Committee had participated in an expert meeting on rooting the post-2015 development agenda's goal on gender equality in the norms and standards of the Convention, organized by the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation in cooperation with OHCHR. At the meeting, they had discussed the zero draft text of the Sustainable Development Goals from a women's rights perspective.

17. **Ms. Pimentel** said that she had attended a number of meetings for female lawyers in Brazil where she had spoken about the Convention and amending the national law on violence against women. She had also participated in an expert meeting along with the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice, and in a round table on good practices, in Mexico City.

18. **Ms. Neubauer** said that she had represented the Committee in a panel discussion on preventing and eliminating child, early and forced marriage organized by the Human Rights Council the previous week. She had also given a presentation on issues relating to women's access to justice at a seminar organized by the Gender Equality Commission of the Council of Europe. Lastly, she had participated in a training session on reporting and States parties' obligations under the Convention in Uzbekistan, organized by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

19. **Ms. Šimonović** said that she had emphasized the importance of the Convention as a tool for change that was helping to dismantle patriarchal societies and foster substantive gender equality in a panel debate on the impact of gender stereotypes on the recognition and enjoyment of women's human rights, organized as part of the annual full day discussion on women's rights during the twenty-sixth session of the Human Rights Council in June. Many of the States parties present had also noted the important role of the Convention and the Committee.

20. In May she had participated in a two-day meeting of the Committee's working group on refugee status, asylum and statelessness that had been organized by the Government of Switzerland and attended by a number of external experts. The corresponding draft general recommendation had been reviewed at the meeting and the revised text would be submitted to the Committee during the current session.

21. **Ms. Bareiro-Bobadilla** said that she had taken part in two side events during the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Asunción. The first had focused on gender parity in political representation while the second had celebrated the cooperative links between the Committee and OAS, particularly in their efforts to combat gender violence. She had also attended an interesting NGO meeting in Mexico at which participants had explored the obstacles to application of the Optional Protocol to the Convention in Latin American countries. Despite clear interest in using the Optional Protocol, a lack of awareness and procedural understanding had been apparent that the Committee needed to address.

22. **Ms. Jahan** said that she had highlighted the problems associated with multiple discrimination at a panel discussion on the intersectionality between the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in relation to women and girls with disabilities, organized during the seventh session of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. She had emphasized the Committee's commitment to addressing disability-related discrimination in constructive dialogue, in drafting concluding observations and in specific cases considered under the Optional Protocol. In the post-2015 scenario, she saw considerable scope for the committees to work together in improving the situation of women and children who were doubly disadvantaged.

23. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that she had been invited to chair a forum called to examine the case of the abducted girls in Nigeria with members of the NGO community, human rights activists, legal experts and the media. At the meeting she had drawn attention to the Committee's statement concerning the events and had shared the text of its draft recommendation on girls' and women's right to education, which had garnered considerable interest and support. She had also provided training in the right to representation for members of parliament in Ghana.

24. **Ms. Patten** said that she had been invited by UN-Women to support a campaign to have the reservations to the Convention entered by the Government of Tunisia withdrawn. Although the post-revolution Government had passed a decree providing for the reservations' removal, the decree had been challenged before the Constitutional Court by 10 members of the ruling party prior to the Secretary-General of the United Nations being notified of the decision. Together with women's groups in Tunisia and a constitutional lawyer, she had been involved in 10 days of intense negotiations with the transitional Government that had eventually resulted in an agreement to withdraw the reservations. The Secretary-General had been duly notified.

25. In addition, she had moderated a training session on gender issues for officers of the United Nations Population Fund and government officials from 13 countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia at which she had provided information about technical assistance, particularly for the implementation of concluding observations. She had also assisted the Government of Turkmenistan in the drafting of a national action plan for implementation of the Committee's concluding observations.

26. **Ms. Pomeranzi** said that she had attended a meeting of GENDERNET, the OECD gender equality network, which had provided an opportunity to discuss the post-2015 development agenda for women and girls and the Committee's role in monitoring progress towards the post-2015 targets.

27. She had greatly appreciated the opportunity to contribute to the intergovernmental debate regarding the post-2015 agenda at the meeting organized by the Freidrich-Ebert Foundation to which the Chairperson had referred earlier. At that meeting she and her fellow Committee members had analysed the draft text of the proposed sustainable development goals and had concluded that, while the inclusion of a stand-alone goal on gender was a clear advance, the language used in areas such as sexual and reproductive health was deficient, the notion of care work and caregiving was not adequately developed and the Committee's monitoring role was not duly reflected. They were also concerned that the preamble made no mention of the Committee despite referring to a number of other international treaty bodies. She proposed raising those concerns in a letter to be sent to the Freidrich-Ebert Foundation for inclusion in its final report on the draft.

28. **The Chairperson** said that a side event on the Committee's role in the post-2015 framework was envisaged during the sixty-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2014.

29. **Ms. Haidar** said that she had addressed a group of international aid workers in a workshop on women, peace and security organized during the 2014 Dubai International Humanitarian Aid Development Conference and Exhibition. Having accorded particular attention in the workshop to the Committee's general recommendation No. 30, she believed that more awareness-raising work with that audience would be beneficial. She had also facilitated a session on women and education at which she had discussed the Committee's draft recommendation on the right to education, with particular reference to displaced girls and girls in conflict situations, especially in Syria.

30. With Ms. Gabr, she had participated in a round-table discussion on sexual violence in the public sphere hosted by the International Federation for Human Rights in Cairo.

Lastly, she had facilitated a discussion on women and nationality organized by the Lebanese disapora with a view to advancing calls for Lebanese women to be able to transmit their nationality to their children.

31. **Ms. Gabr** said that she had attended the meeting organized by the National Council for Human Rights of Egypt chaired by Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali at which delegates had discussed the obstacles preventing women in Africa from enjoying their key rights. At the round-table discussion on sexual violence to which Ms. Haidar had referred, delegates had considered whether a specific instrument was needed to tackle violence against women or whether the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was sufficient to meet that need. At a meeting of French jurists, she had spoken about the role of women in Egypt during the transition period and in the future.

32. **Ms. Nwanko** said that she had given a presentation on gender equality in elections at a meeting organized by the United Nations Development Programme in Nigeria for members of the independent electoral commission in Nigeria – a body in which female representation was totally lacking. Drawing attention to article 7 of the Convention, she had called on participants to mainstream gender and equality in their work and thus to ensure women's participation in the 2015 elections.

33. **Ms. Zou** Xiaoqiao said that she had given a presentation on the content and principles of the Convention at a leadership capacity-building workshop held in Beijing in May, which had been attended by representatives of government bodies, women's NGOs and political parties from eight African countries. She had encouraged the two Sudanese delegates present to push for ratification of the Convention and had been assured that the Government of Sudan was giving that possibility consideration.

34. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** said that at a conference on men's groups and their response to feminism held in May in Vancouver, she had raised the possibility of using the Convention's provisions to counter attacks on feminism and attempts to undermine women's advancement. At a conference in Israel she had spoken about general recommendation No. 29 and the need to raise awareness of its content and promote its adoption by all States parties.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention

35. **The Chairperson**, speaking as the Chairperson of the pre-sessional working group for the fifty-eighth session, said that the group had met from 21 to 25 October to prepare lists of issues and questions concerning the periodic reports of the Central African Republic, Georgia, India, Lithuania, Mauritania, Peru, Swaziland and the Syrian Arab Republic. Particular attention had been paid to how those States parties had followed up on the Committee's previous concluding observations. Inputs had also been provided to the working group, in writing and in person, by representatives of United Nations entities and specialized agencies, as well as by NGOs. The finalized lists of issues and questions had been transmitted to the relevant States parties.

Follow-up to the consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention

36. **Ms. Zou** Xiaoqiao, speaking as alternate rapporteur for follow-up on behalf of Ms. Bailey, rapporteur for follow-up, recalled that she and Ms. Bailey had met with representatives of Libya during the Committee's fifty-seventh session and had obtained positive responses and useful information.

37. At the end of the session, follow-up letters detailing the outcome of assessments had been sent to Bangladesh, Italy, Lesotho and Sri Lanka, and a follow-up letter requesting

additional information had been sent to Myanmar. First reminders on overdue follow-up reports had been sent to Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Kuwait, Montenegro and Oman, and a first reminder about overdue additional information had been sent to Tanzania. Second reminders had been sent to Burkina Faso, Kenya, Malta, South Africa and Uganda.

38. Mauritius and Paraguay had submitted follow-up reports on time. Overdue follow-up reports had been received from Belarus, Laos, Liechtenstein, Republic of Korea and Singapore, with delays ranging from 4 to 27 months. Additional information had been received from the Netherlands and Turkey. She invited Ms. Neubauer, the country rapporteur for the Netherlands and Liechtenstein, to assist in the assessment of information received from those States parties and called for volunteers to assist in the assessment of the follow-up reports received from other States parties and the additional information submitted by Turkey. Follow-up reports had also been received from Brazil, Costa Rica, Kenya and Montenegro, however, as they had either been recently translated or were still pending translation, those reports would be assessed at the fifty-ninth session.

39. During its current session, the Committee would send first reminders to Algeria, Grenada, Jordan, New Zealand, Norway, the Republic of the Congo and Zimbabwe. Second reminders should be sent to Djibouti, Ethiopia, Nepal, Tunisia and Zambia. In addition, a meeting should be scheduled with representatives of Haiti.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 11.20 a.m.